

Historic District Commission
Meeting January 11, 2011
Minutes

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JAN 27 2011

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting was opened at 7:30PM by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman.

Present were Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB), David Honn (DH), Ron Rose (RR), Michaela Moran (MM), Maya Minkin (MMK) and David Barrat (DB). Terra Friedrichs (TF) arrived at 8:35PM. Scott Kutil (SK) and Mike Gowing (MG), BoS liaison were absent

Citizen's Concerns: David Honn raised the issue of the lack of timeliness of the approval of plaque to be placed on his house denoting historic information. The application for his plaque was submitted in mid-October. There has been no resolution as yet. It should not take more than two weeks to a month to process this for approval. DB and MM will work on this.

The Historic Commission Issues the plaques but in the historic districts they need to be submitted to the HDC for approval for appropriateness regarding materials and design. The finished sign must be a product of the two agendas. This also requires HDC's sending out abutters' notices. HC does not have to deal with as much red tape. RR We should try to grant approval simultaneously with HC and try to get the abutters' list sooner. We need to work on a more streamlined process.

Minutes of 12/14/10 and 12/28/10 approved unanimously by consent.

The Section 106 update was taken out of order by unanimous approval.

David Honn must be recognized by the excellent letter he wrote to FTA. It succinctly captured all of the issues and comments raised in prior meetings. The Mass. Historic Commission will communicate with the FTA and will either recommend continued progress or recommend that the AHDC mediate for recommended changes. We are at the mercy of the MBTA. We will continue to meet with SATSAC to accomplish small changes. The Board of Selectmen will also send a letter to the FTA expressing the feeling that the solution is respectful of the concerns of the town. Similar letters were written to the MBTA.

DH Ann Forbes says that on line reports have accused us (HDC) of being obstructionists.

KAB It is important that in public discussions as individuals we refrain from making pejorative statements.

RR It is all right to be polite but still have a position as opposed to being neutral as long as we maintain a calm, professional tone and chose our words well.

We should look at the designs that other towns have for their own train stations. The Preservation Alliance came up with several solutions where head houses had disappeared. More to come.

7:45 445 Main Street. Application #1046-Window replacement Owners Jeff Calvert and -L. Kondraki. MM visited the house and noted that the sashes are all in excellent condition. This makes possible several options for the owners. New England Restoration Alliance can give an estimate on repairing the windows rather than replacing them. The windows can be weather-stripped and the pains can be replaced where leaking. The cost would be \$250-300 per window. The window repair consultant also recommended replacing the exterior storm windows. The matter was continued to January 25, 2011 with the recommendation that the owners consider repairing rather than replacing. MM to provide information on such windows as the Jeld-Wen true divided light having one sash with glass insert to as a storm window. She referred Jerry Mazzola, who appeared on behalf of the owners, to an address where this type of windows exist. The address is 200 Marlboro Road, Sudbury, MA. The storm glass fits over the muntin. We need to vote on this no later than February 6, 2011 so we will do so on January 25, our next meeting unless the owners consent to an extension preferably to the second meeting in February. Jerry Mazzola has been very cooperative in working toward reaching an acceptable solution.

In another matter located at the rear of the house it is proposed to replace the middle window in the rear. Is replacement out of our jurisdiction? It is reported that it cannot be seen from the street. All the other windows are in our jurisdiction. There is a small, metal 2 over 2 window on the second floor. Five windows are to be replaced in the rear of the house. Jerry to bring in photos or plans on January 25, 2011. The time is to be determined. If the window or windows are not in our jurisdiction we will issue a certificate of non-applicability. We will need photos submitted with the application. Jerry will send the pictures to MM. MM will speak to Frank Ramsbottom as to what is in our jurisdiction. MM Restoring windows and buying new storms would be a replacement in kind. RR Triple-track storm windows are out of our jurisdiction. Plastic jams look awful. All storms including triple track are out of our jurisdiction. Would like to see triple track replaced with wood storm windows. DH Have them look at the video on the Acton Community channel. The video was produced as a part of a seminar. Can it be replayed?

Review of Applications and Assignments: #1048 RR to meet with applicant. The application is incomplete. Application #1047 is on the agenda for next Tuesday. Other applications and their assignees were also discussed.

We need to provide feedback to Terra on the HDC website informational value.

8:30 Acton 20/20 (Master Plan) Celia Kent appeared on behalf of the Acton 20/20 Visioning Process Master Plan. The process started with the public hearing last fall. The committee is working on an early draft. More data is being collected from various town committees, commissions, etc. In Phase 1 the object is to identify the goals. Preserve the town character, preserve the village centers and preserve and enhance the town's resources.

From operations meeting 20/20 has planned three meetings to test goals. Identify six burning issues – two per meeting. Identify burning issues in March. By mid-May 3 have our

3rd public outreach. By September prepare a draft Master Plan. By November work on finalizing the plan and present the finished plan to Town Meeting.

KAB Different committees are to be interviewed. Despite our role as data collector we were never contacted. In the historic districts assets are clearly within our purview and concern. There is development without consulting with us.

DH We are the only committee operating under state statute. Why are we so often overlooked?

KAB Could email Margaret Kristin and Roland to attend our January 25, 2011 meeting. Each to be interviewed.

CK The plan is to collect data identify issues develop ideas. Tonight our meeting is to collect input from the HDC regarding challenges and opportunities.

KAB: You need to get information on a Macro and Micro basis. Our challenges are to preserve and enhance districts, educate the town regarding the state law, conduct lectures, seek to improve the by-laws. There are three immediate goals: promote historic preservation, enhance the districts and educate the town.

MMK Regarding challenges and opportunities one challenge is the negative perception of HDC. We are misunderstood. Opportunities- We have no staff. We need to hold more lectures on preservation, and sustainability.

DH There is a need to return to farm land. Real estate has decreased so much.

RR One challenge is the conflict between esthetic development as opposed to economic and politically based development. We need to strengthen our bylaws. An example of this conflict is issue over the barn on 57 Robbins Way removed to facilitate development for purely economic reasons. The town needs to translate goals into bylaws to capture and codify esthetic judgment.

DH We have no authority- Have lived here for three and a half years. On the Design Review Board. Town does what it wants and doesn't care about preservation. It permits obliteration of entire sites for parking facilities and clear cuts sites for construction without any restriction. In some towns stone walls and other monumentation having cultural implications cannot be removed. We have a cultural resources list but it is unenforceable.

DB We simply need to be kept in the loop whenever someone in any historic district seeks to alter the outside of any structure in the district. Mandate that the building inspector direct the owner to us first to discuss appropriate alterations or improvements.

KAB There is a patchwork approach to preservation of the town's character. McMansioning of cape style houses, clear cutting. We need to save what is saveable. There are 8200 properties in Acton and we need to protect and preserve the town's character. The

character includes 1950's as well as the 1980-90's architecture which can co-exist. We need to focus on articulating values. What can we do? Introduce massive cohesive elements such as the use of trees as canopies to help unify and conserve neighborhoods. Create green belts.

MM Codify methods of preserving character. Avoid reinterpretation by the Planning Department of the by-laws and statutes to frustrate preservation. For example should we have sidewalks everywhere?

TF Staff interpretation and massing constructs. Town staff tells the BoS to make decisions that will avoid lawsuits by land owners. Let developers do whatever they want. The BoS is trained to be afraid. We need to educate the public, to reverse positions on land clearing by law. We need to eliminate grandfathering as other towns have done. Have bylaws that are not a part of zoning and therefore do not have an implied or expressed grandfathering component. Keep restrictions outside of the zoning sphere. A major goal is to avoid the rush to clear, to eliminate the profit incentive to build. Provide financial incentives away from developing. Help developers take away the financial incentive. Plan sites with developers. Include consideration of cultural resources. Preservation of the town character should be the primary goal instead of allowing build-out. We need better control of over-massing.

CK: Understanding as a part of the long range plan includes expanding the historic districts to include other significant buildings currently outside the districts such as those on Maple and Martin Streets. Outreach is necessary to prevent demolition of historic buildings. A historic district could be created for one building as a stand alone historic district. We need to consider what the town wants 200 years from now.

MM Maintain landscapes, no meadows turned into soccer fields. Difficult to get bigger projects off the ground.

DH Open space nice to have set aside lands cheaper than to allow development. Better to set aside land as being more economically responsible.

TF Re Long Range Plan There is three billion in property values. We need to look at buildout as a cost to taxpayers.

DH Master Plan and Long Range Plan are never visual enough, never graphic enough, Too much number crunching. One of the challenges is revitalization in all the villages.

KDB There are three things we want the MP Committee to know. We are talking big issues. What will be the impact on water, schools and infrastructure 50 years from now? What changes should be made to safeguard future schools, open space and character? None of the committees are coordinated to get larger projects done. Schools are suffering. Sliding downhill. A 4th thing; property values are inflated because the schools perform well. There is a link between good schools and property values.

DH HDC is known as the esthetic police. If more is known about the state statute (c. 40C), the better the town's understanding is of our function and the consequences of our efforts. We need to be larger body to administrate to grater Acton.

MM Historic preservation 95% private help those who are economically challenged to be able to financially make the appropriate alterations or improvements. Possibly the CPC could provide loan programs for those on our list.

MMK We need to be more accessible to people who need advisory time as frustration.

RR There is a big leap from stating these things to the achieving them. Preservation means enlarging the historic district. We need support from abutters and detracton from developers.

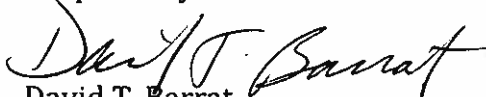
TF Economics of preservation money staff and process behind it Take out built-in incentives to demolition. Try vizualation of buildout.

DH Why is preservation bad? More money in preservation. We need to change attitudes. Preservation and profit are not mutually exclusive.

The Planning Collaborative has not contacted us.

Meeting adjourned at 10PM.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David T. Barrat".

David T. Barrat
Secretary